vinetur

# Higher-alcohol ready-to-drink beverages gain popularity as brands respond to demand for bolder flavors

New product launches in the US, UK, and Japan reflect shifting consumer preferences and increased innovation in the RTD market

Friday, May 2, 2025



The ready-to-drink (RTD) beverage market is seeing a notable shift as higher-alcohol options gain ground, even as many consumers continue to seek moderation. In recent years, brands have introduced a growing number of RTDs with alcohol by volume (ABV) levels of 7% and above. This trend is especially visible in the United States, United Kingdom, and Japan, where both established and emerging brands are launching products that cater to drinkers looking for stronger flavors and more intense experiences.

Data from IWSR Radius shows that the share of new RTD launches with higher ABV has increased significantly. In the U.S., the proportion of RTDs above 7% ABV rose from 25% in 2021 to 33% in 2024. The UK saw an even sharper rise, with these products making up more than half of new launches in 2024, compared to just a third three years earlier. Japan continues to be a leader in this space, with products like Suntory's Strong Zero, which contains 9% ABV, maintaining strong popularity.

The move toward higher-ABV RTDs reflects broader trends in the alcohol industry. Consumers are showing interest in high-proof spirits such as barrel-strength whiskeys and still-strength tequilas. This demand for bolder drinking experiences is now influencing the RTD category, encouraging brands to innovate with both flavor and strength.

Branding strategies for these products are also evolving. Companies are using clear language and bold packaging to differentiate their higher-ABV offerings from those focused on moderation. Terms like "stronger," "bolder," and "extra" appear prominently on cans and bottles, signaling both the elevated alcohol content and the promise of a more robust taste.

While much of the momentum comes from the U.S., international markets are quickly catching up. In the UK, Hooch's "Soopa Hooch" has entered the market as a high-ABV option. In Japan, high-strength RTDs have been popular for several years, with major players like Suntory leading the way.

Industry analysts point out that this counter-trend does not necessarily contradict the movement toward moderation. Instead, it expands consumer choice within the RTD category. Some drinkers may prefer a single strong beverage over multiple lighter

ones, while others may enjoy having options that suit different occasions or moods.

The rise of higher-ABV RTDs is reshaping expectations for what ready-to-drink beverages can offer. As brands continue to experiment with flavors and strengths, consumers can expect even more variety on store shelves in the coming months and years. This dynamic segment is likely to remain a focal point for innovation as companies respond to changing tastes across global markets.